

TED4603
ACTION PERC-00

INFO	LOG-00	EEB-00	AF-00	AMAD-00	A-00	INL-00	DOT-00
	DHSE-00	EUR-00	OIGO-00	FAAE-00	FO-00	H-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	MED-07	MOFM-00	MOF-00	CDC-00
	NEA-00	DCP-00	ISN-00	NSCE-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	ISNE-00
	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	IRM-00	NCTC-00	CBP-00	BBG-00	R-00
	IIP-00	SCRS-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	ALM-00	SCA-00
	SAS-00	FA-00	SRAP-00	SWCI-00	PESU-00	SANA-00	/008W
				-----D9C34C 161237Z /38			

O 161215Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3184

S E C R E T KABUL 003677

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2029
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [AMGT](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: WELCOME TO AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Karl W. Eikenberry, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Madame Secretary, We warmly welcome you to Afghanistan. Your visit caps a period of political and security challenges here, which we see moving into a new phase of consolidation. The Afghan government and public appreciate our increases in civilian personnel; our continued military presence and improved effectiveness in key regions, especially the south; and our new strategic purpose to achieve peace by strengthening security, to build access to justice and broader governance capacity at both the national and local levels, and to build prosperity through economic development. However, Afghan government corruption threatens its legitimacy and effectiveness, while the security situation remains dire in many areas. Your visit will allow you to see first-hand the tremendous efforts and the great potential of our strategy here and will optimize our message to the Karzai government that Afghan officials must take the lead in providing their own security and must improve their record on governance.

- - - - -
The New Karzai Government
- - - - -

¶2. (SBU) President Karzai will take his second oath of office on November 19. After a contentious and fraud-marred election, some question Karzai's legitimacy but he still enjoys the broad acceptance of the Afghan people. In conceding the need for a second round because his vote total was less than 50 percent of the valid votes cast, President Karzai accepted - grudgingly - that nearly a million of his initial votes had to be thrown out as fraudulent. Nonetheless, he has never publicly apologized or disassociated himself from those who committed fraud on his behalf.

¶3. (C) Dr. Abdullah, the closest presidential challenger, withdrew November 1 from the second round of elections and has not made any public or concrete moves to start a formal opposition movement. We understand he is rallying supporters and may be considering forming his own political party. He has not been in direct contact with President Karzai, but indirect negotiations are ongoing. He may be offered a post heading a commission on constitutional reform. President Karzai is expected to announce his cabinet selection within two weeks of his inauguration.

¶4. (C) Decisions must be made soon regarding the date for the Parliamentary, District Council, and Mayoral elections scheduled for 2010. The USG and other donors will be part of any debate regarding the pros and cons of holding the elections as scheduled in the spring, delaying them until summer or fall, or even postponing them further to allow for a much-needed elections process overhaul. If the Independent

Electoral Commission makes a unilateral declaration on the election date before this debate has concluded, it will be extremely difficult to walk back.

- - - - -
Issues of Security and Sovereignty
- - - - -

15. (SBU) GEN Stanley McChrystal, commander of USFOR-A and ISAF since June 2009, faces a military situation in Afghanistan of sharply increasing violence over the last two years. Attacks in the last months are at their highest levels since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, partly because the Coalition is going after insurgent sanctuaries and safe havens. GEN McChrystal's successful reduction of civilian casualties -- an issue which undermines Afghan popular and government backing for all we do -- has occurred alongside a much more focused military effort to provide a secure environment for strengthening Afghanistan's society and government and for implementing the growing civilian programs designed for those ends.

16. (SBU) U.S. forces are expected to top 68,000 in 2010; there are approximately 35,000 non-U.S. international forces in Afghanistan. The quality and size of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is also rising, with current levels about 98,000 Afghan army personnel and 93,800 Afghan police. The Afghan army is growing by more than 2,500 personnel per month and should reach 134,000 in 2011. Vigorous reform programs are underway to reduce corruption, especially in the Afghan National Police (ANP). The GIROA continues to be ambivalent about its sovereign burden, and many in the President's inner circle do not want the U.S. to leave and turn over this responsibility to the ANSF. Some assume we covet their territory for a never-ending war on terror and for military bases to use against surrounding powers.

- - - - -
Developing Governance
- - - - -

17. (SBU) Karzai's state and government suffer from an inability to deliver essential services, compounded by endemic corruption, political intimidation, poverty, criminality, insurgency and ethno-tribal politics - all exacerbated by three decades of war and misrule since the Russian invasion of 1979. Electoral dynamics have further complicated the problem, leading Karzai to make expedient decisions to gain votes, while relegating top-flight leaders like Interior Minister Atmar to deliver police services. Atmar is one among a solid group of impressively capable and clean, though hardly a-political, technocratic leaders. They are joined by many other Afghans, including some who have returned from abroad, dedicated to rebuilding their country. The energy and ambition of Afghan youth are particularly striking at the burgeoning university campuses.

18. (SBU) To improve responsiveness in Afghan institutions and local capacity, we require increased U.S. civilian presence alongside the increases in U.S. military personnel. In August 2009, the Mission had 470 U.S. civilians in Afghanistan, including 159 in the field; we anticipate reaching 944 by the end of the year, of which 287 will be in the field. The new civilians will join various State Department and USAID elements, the Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutors and the FBI (Legal Attache), the Departments of Agriculture, Treasury, Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation (DOT), and Health and Human Services (HHS/CDC), as well as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). In Kabul, we are helping Afghans create a merit-based, professional bureaucracy, and building its capacity to deliver services to the public. Strong ministries include Foreign Affairs, Defense, Public Health, Education, Finance, Communications, Rural Development, Counternarcotics, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, and the Afghan Central Bank. The Interior, Agriculture and Finance Ministries enjoy strong leadership, while the Supreme Court

and the Ministry of Justice suffer from the acute lack of qualified professionals, a legal system that combines elements of Sharia, tribal, and Western law, and a lack of national consensus on the way forward.

¶9. (SBU) Outside Kabul, U.S. civilian and military efforts focus on strengthening local government and delivering basic government services through integrated civilian-military Brigade Task Forces, PRTs, and District Support Teams. We work with traditional leadership structures and with those who gained power through force or wealth during the days of conflict, but who have proven ready to cooperate with constitutional government and rule of law. Lack of local consensus, traditionally weak connections between the capital and provinces, long-standing personal, ethnic, and tribal rivalries and distrust, and the presence of insurgents or criminals complicate our task. Our goal is to help support more visible, effective and honest governance at the sub-national level, with well functioning links to the center. We are currently supporting a new GIROA interagency process to identify a limited number of "pilot districts" in which GIROA, donors, Afghan and coalition security forces would collaborate to clear and hold areas where the Afghan government is unable to provide basic services and ensure population security.

¶10. (SBU) Narcotics and other transnational crime remain a key challenge in Afghanistan, with critical implications for our counter-insurgency (COIN) efforts and rule of law within the country. In implementing our new counternarcotics strategy, we have moved away from costly eradication efforts that have yielded limited results and alienated large segments of the population. We are now going after high level processing and trafficking targets and the systems that support them, and creating incentives to farmers to turn to licit crops. Our agriculture programs give farmers easier access to permanent alternatives to poppy cultivation; our development programs provide incentives for local communities to not grow poppy. DEA is expanding from 9 to 70 agents, and INL has shifted its focus to supporting increased interdiction efforts. We are supporting the rule of law by helping build Afghan law enforcement institutions, prosecutorial services, courts, and corrections systems. We are also increasing our public information efforts to educate communities about the risks of growing poppy, the possibilities of alternate livelihoods, and the danger of addiction.

¶11. (SBU) Afghanistan accounts for 90 percent of the world's opium. The September 2 UNODC Opium Survey reported that poppy cultivation decreased by 22 percent this year (following a 19 percent decrease in 2008), while production decreased by 10 percent (the difference accounted for by higher yields). The number of poppy-free provinces has risen from 18 to 20, out of a total of 34. All of the provinces in the northern region are poppy free for the first time in almost a decade, but diminishing poppy cultivation remains a critical challenge. Six provinces in the troubled south and west account for 97 percent of Afghanistan's poppy cultivation. Helmand Governor Mangal conducted a comprehensive campaign leading to a 33 percent reduction of the poppy crop. The narcotics fight in Afghanistan is a key link in breaking financing to the insurgency, combating corruption, and establishing the rule of law.

- - - - -
Gender and Human Rights
- - - - -

¶12. (SBU) A thin but outspoken stratum of Afghan society increasingly is giving voice to a desire for positive political reform and social change -- reflecting the outlooks of a young but determined demographic in this conservative society. There have been recent improvements in legislation protecting women, and in the period running up to the Presidential elections there was unprecedented coverage of candidate debates, forums, and interviews, widening the content and quality of information available to the public.

Nonetheless, other aspects of Afghanistan's human rights record remain poor, including violence and discrimination against women, lack of due process and weak rule of law, and intimidation restricting the exercise of free speech. In the face of powerful conservative religious and tribal patriarchal traditions, the Afghan government has shown a lack of sustained will to press forward a systematic campaign to promote and protect human rights, particularly women's rights.

¶13. (SBU) Civil society leaders advocating gender equity have an impact far beyond their low numbers and offer hope and inspiration for the future. Most of our Afghan civil society interlocutors say the process which led to reform in the published version of the Shia Personal Status Law (SPSL) is a step forward in advancing women's rights. However, they also agree that there is still room for improvements in the law as several articles contradict Afghan women's constitutional right to equality. Most believe the law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) is a strong law that will protect women's rights, and the Women's Commission in Parliament is currently working in conjunction with international and Afghan legal experts as well as civil society to further strengthen the law.

Little Momentum on Taliban Reconciliation

¶14. (SBU) Working within President Obama's stated U.S. policy on reconciliation of March 27: "There will be no peace without reconciliation among former enemies... That's why we will work with local leaders, the Afghan government, and international partners to have a reconciliation process in every province" and your July 15 speech before the Council on Foreign Relations, "we and our Afghan allies stand ready to welcome anyone supporting the Taliban who renounces Al-Qaeda lays down their arms, and is willing to participate in the free and open society that is enshrined in the Afghan Constitution", ISAF and the Embassy support the GIROA developing a policy framework for reintegration, in particular aimed at groups of disaffected fighters. Afghans broadly welcome such a policy but reconciliation with Taliban or other insurgent leaders remains controversial. Many believe it will lead to reduced violence and instability, while others (non-Pashtuns, women, and some civil society groups) fear an intra-Pashtun deal at the expense of their interests. Although there are spikes of press stories from time to time about behind-the-scenes deals with the Quetta Shura and Hezb-i-Islami Gulbadin, the reality is no deal is imminent.

Strengthening the Economy

¶15. (SBU) The Minister of Commerce remains committed to completing the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) by the end of December. However, the fourth round of negotiations has been repeatedly delayed due to Pakistani hesitation to negotiate, at first pending the Afghan election outcome and also due to some resistance on part of the Afghan MFA. You should reinforce our desire for Afghanistan and Pakistan to finish the agreement. Heavy spring rains boosted agricultural production in 2009, yielding bumper wheat, vegetable and fruit crops. This, along with growth in the services sector, has spurred real economic growth to about ten percent in 2009-2010. Inflation is under two percent, and the Afghan currency is stable. Relatively young, dynamic and reformist ministers of Finance, Commerce, and Agriculture are taking positive steps to improve the business climate. We are encouraging the government to implement major economic reforms to support private sector development. Afghanistan's key economic challenge is to establish conditions for self-sustaining growth and strengthen fiscal sustainability so that it can develop a healthy business environment; eliminate corruption, and reduce dependence on foreign aid over time. It remains one of the poorest countries in the

world, and is facing spending increases that are further outpacing revenue year-over-year.

¶16. (U) Afghanistan officials are beginning to recognize the need for water-sharing agreements, partly because Afghanistan has now lost World Bank funding for two water infrastructure projects due to its unwillingness to notify affected downstream countries. All of Afghanistan's major river basins are internationally shared, but none are governed by trans-boundary rights agreements. Absent effective agreements, few international donors will finance large-scale hydro-power projects.

- - - - -
Fast-Tracking our Assistance and the Longer Term
- - - - -

¶17. (U) Our new approach to foreign assistance in Afghanistan focuses on increasing our effectiveness and establishing a genuine Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA)- U.S. partnership to benefit the Afghan people. We are supporting GIROA efforts to achieve sustainability by increasing domestic revenues, increasing budget disbursement and transparency, and growing a cadre of functional civil servants hired and promoted on the basis of merit. We are shifting to job creation, including agricultural productivity and alternative livelihoods, infrastructure, education and vocational training, capacity building, governance and rule of law. At the national level, more U.S. assistance is being channeled through the Afghan Government's core budget. The increase in civilian and military presence in the field will allow us to partner with sub-national officials to extend the reach of the GIROA to district levels. We are shifting our assistance to smaller, flexible, and faster contract and grant mechanisms to increase decision-making at the more local levels. A coordinated civilian-military coalition and an effective U.S. regional counterinsurgency strategy will provide the framework in which assistance efforts operate. We are also encouraging local procurement initiatives, such as Afghan First, so monies will benefit the local economy and a broader swath of the population, and maximizing all USG resources by sector and geographically to build government effectiveness and increase stability. USAID infrastructure activities employ 26,000 Afghans and emphasize the power, water, and transportation sectors in the south and east. Public Health officials have announced more than 700 possible cases of H1N1 flu (almost 600 of those represent Coalition forces) and declared a three-week closure of all schools to prevent further spread of the disease. Officials have asked us to provide Tamiflu and the H1N1 vaccine, which we are working through the World Health Organization to contribute.

- - - - -
International Community and Afghanistan
- - - - -

¶18. (SBU) Relations between the Afghan government and the international community are uneven. UNAMA SRSG Kai Eide plays a key coordination role, but suffers from the aftermath of elections-related strains between his office and the President. Since the October 27 attack on a UN guest house in Kabul, which left five UN employees dead, senior UN officials contend that operations are proceeding virtually unhindered. However, the attacks were devastating to the UN community, and many junior and mid-level UN staff are dubious whether security is adequate. A recent public rift between the Karzai administration and UN leadership compounds the problem. You and SSRAP Holbrooke have rallied world attention and increased resources to confront the Afghan-Pakistan complex of threats to regional stability. International support is holding, as demonstrated at recent conferences, including the April 2009 Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. We hope to encourage greater involvement by Islamic nations, particularly those with experience of moderate Islam such as Egypt and Malaysia, in Afghanistan's business, cultural and political activities. A conference of Foreign Ministers in January, projected to be held in

Afghanistan, would be the first time that the Afghan people can witness their government's interaction with the international community - a sign of progress and maturity.

- - - - -
Management
- - - - -

¶19. (SBU) By year end, we will have doubled USG civilian staffing complement from where we stood at mid-2009. The related challenges are immense, and include recruitment, hiring, clearing, training, funding, and orienting personnel, as well as providing workspace and life-support requirements.

We also face growing difficulties in the recruitment of local staff in certain specialties, as there is great competition for the small pool of well-qualified candidates. We have acquired a 7.5-acre parcel of land adjacent to the East side of the mission compound. We continue to press for more property, both in Kabul, and in Mazar-e Sharif and Herat, where we plan to open consulates. While the Afghan government is cooperative, political uncertainty has delayed finalizing and implementing agreements, including leases for Mazar and Herat. We are also consolidating Mission motorpools, communications systems, and aircraft reservations.

EIKENBERRY